

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
White River Field Office  
73544 Hwy 64  
Meeker, CO 81641**

**DECISION RECORD/FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
West Douglas Herd Area Amendment  
to the  
White River Resource Management Plan  
CO-WRFO-05-083-DR/FONSI**

**Reference:** Environmental Assessment (EA) Record CO-WRFO-05-083-EA, West Douglas Herd Area Amendment to the White River Resource Management Plan (RMP).

**Finding of No Significant Impact:** The environmental assessment analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

**Proposed Decision/Rationale:** It is my decision to implement Alternative A, of EA CO-WRFO-05-083-EA. This alternative calls for implementing the current Record of Decision for the 1997 White River Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the total removal of wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area by 2007.

The purpose of the West Douglas Herd Area Land Use Plan Amendment is to identify whether it is feasible at this time to manage wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area of the White River Resource Area, while protecting resource values, providing for multiple uses, and improving the health of public lands. The Bureau of Land Management initiated this planning process to determine whether it should amend decisions in its 1997 Resource Management Plan (RMP) which calls for the removal of the wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area.

Numerous alternatives (nine) for the management of wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area were considered during this planning process which involved public participation and involvement throughout. This planning effort took the requisite hard look at a wide-range of alternatives. Various herd sizes, including zero horses, 29 to 60 horses, 100 to 207 horses, 310 to 643 horses, and their manageability with other ongoing land uses were analyzed.

Our analysis concluded that only a small herd of 29 to 60 horses could be managed within the West Douglas Herd Area and still be in balance with other multiple resource land uses. Management of a herd of 29 to 60 horses would require long term intensive management and would require the introduction of mares from outside the herd to ensure the long term genetic viability in order to produce a self sustaining wild horse herd. Based on this information and agency discretion, the Bureau of Land Management

has determined that managing horses in the West Douglas Herd Area would require a disproportionate allocation of agency resources and that this would not be the best use of agency resources overall.

It is also important to take into account that during the 1997 White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan planning process all existing Herd Areas, including the West Douglas Herd Area were comprehensively considered for the management of wild horses. As a result of that inclusive public planning process and analysis, which considered all the historic horse range and habitat within our jurisdiction, the Piceance/East Douglas Herd Management Area containing 190,130 acres was established. The Piceance/East Douglas Herd Management Area, which lies adjacent to the West Douglas Herd Area but is separated by a highway and fences, was created because it is the most suitable area where a self sustaining herd of wild horses could be managed in a manner that would result in a thriving natural ecological balance. The Land Use Plan specifies 95 to 140 animals as the initial herd size, but identifies a process for revision based on current rangeland data. Our current objective of 165 animals is based on an analysis of long term grazing use by all sources, in conjunction with climate studies and rangeland trend.

Therefore, after careful consideration it is my determination that it is not appropriate to manage a herd of wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area, given the complexity associated with the intensive management requirements to ensure the survivability of the herd in conjunction with the other multiple uses occurring throughout the West Douglas Herd Area. Furthermore, as a result of this analysis, I concur with the existing 1997 White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan that the Piceance East Douglas Herd Management Area is the most suitable area to manage wild horses within the White River Resource Area and the decision to remove the wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area still remains the most appropriate management decision. The West Douglas Herd Area will remain eligible for consideration for wild horse management in the future.

**Implementation of the Wild Horse Removal:** Implementation of the decision to remove all wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area would occur before 2007. Modification of this timeframe could occur due to changes in funding or National Wild Horse program priorities.

**Summary of Public Comments:** BLM conducted a public review of the alternatives and the environmental assessment for this plan amendment. A summary of these comments with BLM responses is attached.

**Protest Opportunities:** Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage.

Protests must be in writing and shall be filed with the Director, at the following address (for regular mail):

Director (210)  
Bureau of Land Management  
Attn: Brenda Williams, Protest Coordinator  
P.O. Box 66538  
Washington, DC 20035

For overnight (FedEx only) mailing, send protests to:

Director (210)  
Bureau of Land Management  
Attn: Brenda Williams, Protest Coordinator  
1620 L Street, N.W., Suite 1075  
Washington, DC 20036

For an amendment, the protest must be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date. The effective date is October 1, 2005.

To be considered complete, your protest must contain, at a minimum, the following information:

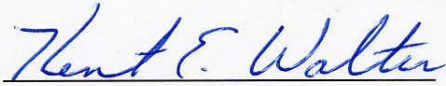
1. The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest.
2. A statement of the issue or issues being raised.
3. A statement of the part or parts of this amendment being protested. To the extent possible, this should be done by reference to specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc., included in the document.
4. A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that you submitted during the planning process, or a reference to date the issue or issues were discussed by you for the record.
5. A concise statement explaining why the Colorado BLM State Director's proposed decision is believed to be incorrect. This is a critical part of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents, environmental analysis documents, or available planning records (i.e., meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.). A protest which merely expresses disagreement with the proposed decisions, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of your information and insight. In this case, the Director's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

The Director will promptly render a decision on the protest. The decision will be in writing and will set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision of the Director will be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

At the end of the 30-day protest period and after the Governor's consistency review, this amendment excluding any portions under protest, will become final. Approval will be withheld on any portion of the amendment under protest until final action has been completed on such protest.

Please direct questions about this Decision Record/FONSI to: Robert Fowler (Project Coordinator), Bureau of Land Management, 73544 Highway 64, Meeker, CO. 81641. (970)878-3840.

**Signature of Recommending Official:**



Kent E. Walter  
Field Manager  
White River Field Office

08-29-05

Date

**APPROVAL**

It is my decision to approve the amendment for the West Douglas Herd Area to the White River Resource Management Plan, as described in the White River Field Manager's recommendation, and analyzed in environmental assessment CO-WRFO-03-050-EA.

**Signature of Authorized Official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ron Wenker  
Colorado State Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT CONSIDERATIONS:** Public comments submitted for this planning review, including names and street addresses of respondents will be available for public review at the White River Field Office during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspections in their entirety.